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Military Aspects of Crisis Are Underlined by Haig and a Pentagon Study

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 20 — A Pentagon assessment of El Salvador's Army asserts that it is so ill-prepared to fight Communist-led insurgents that it has "no hope" of defeating them.

Against that background, Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. has told ambassadors of European allies, as well as the Ambassadors of Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Spain, that the Administration's "most urgent objective" is to stop a large flow of arms from Communist nations to guerrillas in El Salvador.

The Pentagon assessment of El Salvador's Army differed somewhat from a comment today by José Napoleón Duarte, President of the country's ruling junta, who said that the armed forces were capable of handling the guerrillas at present if the flow of arms to the insurgents stopped. What his country needed, most, he said, was economic aid to counter the guerrilla threat.

A memorandum on Mr. Haig's briefing of the foreign ambassadors on Wednesday quoted Mr. Haig as saying that the United States "will not remain passive" to what he described as a "systematic, well-financed, sophisticated effort to impose a Communist regime in Central America."

He also asserted that the United States would not become engaged in "another bloody conflict," as in Vietnam, but would direct its action toward Cuba, which he declared was the main source of the intervention. This morning Mr. Haig was a little less assertive. He remarked to reporters during a brief conversation that there was "grave concern" over "countries intervening illegally in this hemisphere through provision of arms to a Western Hemisphere nation that is seeking to determine its destiny through due process."

The Pentagon assessment, completed this week on the basis of reports from Central America, asserted that the guerrillas would most likely become stronger by April, when new shipments of arms are scheduled to be finished.

Officials here said that the arms, from Vietnam, Ethiopia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and East Germany, were being shipped

through Cuba to Nicaragua and Honduras and, finally, to El Salvador. Most of the weapons, ammunition, communications equipment and medical supplies were reportedly bought or captured from Western nations.

The military assessment prepared by the Defense Department said that El Salvador's army numbered 17,000 men, including administrative and support elements, compared with 3,700 full-time guerrillas and 5,000 who take occasional part in actions. With a combat ratio of about 4 to 1, the analysis said, it would be "impossible" for the Government forces to put down the insurgency.

Guerrillas Have Advantage

Military experts have long held that a conventional army and police force must outnumber an insurgent force by 10 to 1 because the guerrillas have the advantage of knowing where, when and how they will strike.

The Pentagon study said the Salvadoran Army could not control the infiltration of arms and guerrillas from Honduras on the ground, from Nicaragua by water and from both countries by air. Nor, the study added, were the Government forces capable of rooting the guerrillas out of three pockets along the border with Honduras.

The assessment thus concluded that the Salvadoran Army was "not organized to fight a counterinsurgency" battle nor

even a conventional war. It was deemed "more like a 19th century constabulary than a 20th-century army" and was said to have "no hope" of winning with the resources at hand.

In an effort to inform allies of that situation and to build up international support for coming Administration actions, Secretary Haig held his briefing in the State Department. Also involved was an intelligence briefing by Ronald I. Spiers, director of intelligence and research.

A report on the briefing said Mr. Haig asserted that the United States had intelligence "which we consider irrefutable" that the Soviet bloc, with Cuban coordination, was "furnishing at least several hundred tons of military equipment to the Salvadoran leftist insurgents."

Only after the foreign intervention, Mr. Haig asserted, did the United States provide additional military assistance, including weapons, to the Salvadoran Government. He said the Administration was considering additions to \$63 million already appropriated for economic aid this year.

"Our most urgent objective is to stop the large flow of arms through Nicaragua into El Salvador," Mr. Haig said. "We consider what is happening is part of the global Communist campaign coordinated by Havana and Moscow to support the Marxist guerrillas in El Salvador."